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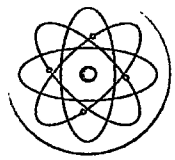
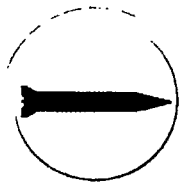
July/August 2000

Proliferation Digest





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National Security Information	Unauthorized Disclosure Subject to Criminal Sanctions

Dissemination Control Abbreviations		
	NOFORN (NF)	Not releasable to foreign nationals
	PROPIN (PR)	Caution—proprietary information involved
	ORCON (OC)	Dissemination and extraction of information controlled by originator
	REL...	This information has been authorized for release to...

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Russian Outbreak Not Smallpox 11 (b)(3)

Analysts in the DCI Nonproliferation Center

According to Russian press reports in June, at least eight Vladivostok children under the age of 14 were exposed to smallpox vaccine while playing with vials of outdated vaccine improperly discarded by a local sanitary and epidemiological disease control center. The children developed smallpox-like symptoms, and some press reports said the children suffered from "smallpox." We assess that the disease outbreak is not smallpox and is not related to biological warfare (BW). The outbreak appears to have been caused by *vaccinia*—the virus used in smallpox vaccines—rather than *variola*—the virus that causes smallpox. (b)(3)

(b)(1)

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NR Record

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Russian Outbreak Not Smallpox

We assess that a disease outbreak among children in Vladivostok initially reported in the Russian press as "smallpox" is not smallpox and is not related to biological warfare (BW). The outbreak appears to have been caused by *vaccinia*—the virus used in smallpox vaccines—rather than *variola*—the virus that causes smallpox. (b)(1) (b)(3)

- Russia's smallpox vaccine—the Lister strain of *vaccinia*—is more pathogenic than the US vaccine strain and can provoke a severe reaction, which is consistent with the children's reportedly severe symptoms.

- In addition, the children were exposed—by ingestion, inhalation, or through cuts in the skin—to much higher doses of *vaccinia* virus than normally would be received during a vaccination. (b)(1) (b)(3) (b)(3)

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*According to Russian press reports in mid-June, at least eight Vladivostok children under the age of 14 were exposed to smallpox vaccine while playing with vials of outdated vaccine improperly discarded by a local sanitary and epidemiological disease control center. The children developed smallpox-like symptoms—high fever and skin lesions—and required hospitalization. Some press reports said the children are suffering from "*ospa*," a word that can be translated either as pox or as smallpox. Russian Health Ministry officials have said the children do not have smallpox.* (b)(3)

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Russia:

Report of Smallpox Vaccine Exposure (b)(3)

Vladivostok child's hands after exposure to smallpox vaccine.

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The storage of smallpox vaccine in Vladivostok is not a particular BW concern. Although smallpox vaccination of the general public should have ended in 1980 with the eradication of the disease, the WHO recommends that countries with existing stocks of smallpox vaccine continue to maintain them.

- Russia's maintenance of its smallpox vaccine stocks suggests continuing concern with pox virus outbreaks caused by naturally occurring viruses, accidental exposure to pox viruses from facilities conducting legitimate or possibly even BW work, or deliberate use of the *variola* virus in BW, whether by Russia or by others.

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